

REMARKS

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections of the application are respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and following remarks.

I. STATUS OF THE CLAIMS AND FORMAL MATTERS

The Office Action indicates that claims 1-24 are pending in this application, with claims 1-6, 8-14, 16-22, and 24 being rejected and claims 7, 15, and 23 being objected to as to form. Claims 1, 9, and 17 are in independent form, the remaining claims being dependent. Claims 1, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 24 are herein amended, and claims 4-7, 12-15, and 20-23 are herein canceled without prejudice or disclaimer. No new matter has been added. It is submitted that the claims, as originally presented, were in full compliance with the requirements of 35 U.S.C. §112. Changes to claims are not made for the purpose of patentability within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §101, §102, §103, or §112. Rather, these changes are primarily directed to form and are made simply for clarification.

II. REJECTIONS UNDER 35 U.S.C. § 102(b)

Claims 1-6, 8-14, 16-22, and 24 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(e) as allegedly anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,556,773 to Tsumagari.

By the present amendment, Applicants have rewritten each of independent claims 1, 9, and 17 to include the limitations of dependent claims 7, 15, and 23, respectively, and any respective intervening claims. The Office Action objects to claim 7, 15, and 23 as being dependent upon rejected base claims, and indicates that each of these claims would be allowable if rewritten in independent form to include the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection of claims 1, 9, and 17 has been obviated and rendered moot, and that these claims are patentable.

III. DEPENDENT CLAIMS

Each of the other claims in this application is dependent on an independent claim discussed above, and is therefore believed patentable for at least the same reasons presented for the independent claim upon which it depends. Since each dependent claim is also deemed to define an additional aspect of the invention, however, the individual reconsideration of the patentability of each on its own merits is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

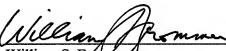
In view of the above, it is submitted that all pending claims are patentable and the application is in condition for allowance, and Applicants respectfully request early reconsideration and allowance of the application.

Applicants gratefully acknowledge the Examiner's consideration of this matter, and the Examiner is respectfully invited to contact Applicants' undersigned representative by telephone on any outstanding issue regarding the application.

Respectfully submitted,

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